

Serving Up Justice: Fusing Service Learning and Social Equity in the Public Administration Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Fusing the concepts of social justice and service learning can create a powerful pedagogical framework for public administration courses. This article explores this fusion framework and its use in a graduate public policy analysis course where local government partnered with faculty to address health disparities. The students utilized the tenets of policy analysis to produce best practices research and a policy analysis on health disparities for the local government client. Social equity can be used both as a delivery mechanism for course content and to produce useful products for a community partner via service-learning. In this model, students not only learn about social equity but also actually participate in social equity work in the context of the class setting, in the process enhancing classroom engagement, skill development, and awareness of social justice through the lens of health disparities.

Imagine a United States county where infant mortality rates are 11 times the national average, where asthma rates are the worst in the country, and where AIDS death rates are among the highest in the nation. Yet in other parts of this county, residents enjoy excellent health outcomes and do not generally suffer from these afflictions. Such a county exists in Fulton County, Georgia. Vast disparities in class and wealth exist in the county. The county includes most of the City of Atlanta, considered a black mecca by many (Ferguson, 2002) and deemed a “Place of a Lifetime” by National Geographic Traveler (2009). It also boasts cities such as Sandy Springs, one of the nation’s top 10 wealthiest cities

(Hartstein, 2010). Yet it also has the dubious distinction of containing some of the poorest urban African American neighborhoods in the country (Ferguson, 2002). The health equity issues are clear and compelling—childhood asthma rates, diabetes, and other health disparities play out spatially along racial and socioeconomic class lines.

Can health equity topics such as those found in Fulton County be used for pedagogical purposes in a public administration classroom? Indeed they can. This paper describes the use of health disparities in a graduate public policy analysis course, where students learned the tenets of policy analysis and produced useful products for Fulton County in the process, including best practices research on other municipal health equity initiatives and a policy analysis with recommendations. Thus, social equity can be used both as a delivery mechanism for course content and to produce useful products for a community partner via service learning. In this model, students not only learn about social equity but *actually do something about it* in the context of the class setting.

The 2004 JPAE symposium exposed several concerns about the positioning of social equity within the public administration discipline, such as not enough social equity research and teaching (Gooden & Myers, 2004). Svava and Brunet (2004) demonstrated that the field fails to adequately incorporate the third pillar of social equity beyond the two pillars of efficiency and effectiveness as an integral component of public administration. The paper reviews these concerns and briefly discusses the general role of service learning in public administration.

After establishing the theoretical foundation, the paper provides the pedagogical framework for teaching public administration in a manner that actually affects social justice, by exploring a specific example of how health equity was tied into course content via service learning. Thus, this research presents a clear pedagogical framework for promulgating this method and adapting it to other contexts and courses, including online learning, compressed time-frame learning, and international or global poverty issues as called for by Wooldridge and Gooden (2009) as well as Candler, Johnson, and Anderson (2009).

We also explore both student and community partner outcomes of the course, including the service-learning products and enhanced student knowledge and appreciation of social justice issues. Though students gained awareness of the health equity issues, the course also exposed the fault lines of the stereotypes discussed by Johnson (2009), highlighting the need for more cultural competencies. The students engaged in rich ethics debate surrounding stakeholders and the redistributive issues surrounding health equity. From the instructor's perspective, the most significant outcome was the focus on the health disparities. Rather than serving as a mere criterion in a standard policy analysis, equity through the lens of health disparities became a fundamental foundation of the course with both philosophical and pragmatic implications.

SERVICE LEARNING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Service learning (SL) is a method of teaching whereby students perform work or create a product for a community partner in a manner that enhances course content. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 identifies service learning as a method that integrates service and structured reflection into the students' curriculum, allowing students to learn and develop "through active participation in a thoughtfully organized service experience that meets actual community needs" (as cited in Willits-Cairn & Kielsmeier, 1991, p. 17). The National Society for Experiential Education defines *service learning* as "any carefully monitored service experience in which a student has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience" (1994, p. 1). The concept emerged from John Dewey's emphasis on learning by doing (Dewey 1939, 1916) as well as Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984).

Key characteristics of SL that distinguish it from simple volunteer work include structured reflection and the explicit connection to course content. Mooney and Edwards's (2001) typology (Table 1) illustrates this well. They delineate several forms of community-based learning, ranging from volunteering to internships to advocacy. Characteristics of SL specifically include structured reflection, application

Table 1.

Hierarchy of Community-Based Learning (CBL)

CBL Options	Out-of-Class Activities	Volunteering	Service Add-ons	Internships	Service Learning	Service-Learning Advocacy
Social Action						X
Structured Reflection					X	X
Apply/Acquire Skills				X	X	X
Curricular Credit			X	X	X	X
Service Rendered		X	X	X	X	X
in the Community	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note: From Mooney & Edwards, 2001.

of skills, curriculum credit, and service rendered to the community. The pedagogical framework expounded here constitutes SL as it incorporates structured reflection, application of skills, course credit, and service rendered to the community (construed here as the broader policy community rather than proximate geographical community).

Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray's (2001) extensive literature review found that the benefits of SL included personal outcomes such as moral development or enhanced personal efficacy and leadership skills (Wang, 2000). Service learning can also produce social outcomes such as increased racial understanding, a sense of social responsibility, commitment to service, and increased community involvement after graduation (Harkavy & Hartley, 2010). Some scholars have identified learning outcomes such as a positive impact on academic learning, ability to apply knowledge in practical settings, enhancement of critical analysis and other academic skills (Eyler & Giles Jr., 1999), and valuable professional skills (Bennett, Henson, & Drane, 2003; Simons & Cleary 2006).

Service learning can take many forms (Beaumont, 2005; Enos & Morton, 2003; Furco, 1996; Nishishiba, Nelson, & Shinn, 2005). For example, Enos and Morton's (2003) typology of SL includes one-time projects or partnerships, short-term placements, ongoing placements, core partnerships, and transformative partnerships, based on the relationship between the university and the community partner. The SL type we focus on here is the client-based course (Waldner & Hunter, 2008), also sometimes called student as consultant or team-based products (Killian, 2004). In Enos and Morton's work, this type would be characterized as a one-time project. This vein of SL allows students to work on actual products for a nonprofit or government partner as part of the course. This type of SL also ties the product closely to course objectives, thus reducing concerns of some scholars (e.g., Butin, 2006a) that SL can represent busy work rather than genuinely enhancing course learning outcomes.

Examples of this type of SL within public administration include Olberding (2009), who describes a project wherein students reviewed real grant proposals for various corporations or foundations and provided recommendations to the grantors. Bright, Bright, and Haley's (2007) students provided expertise to nonprofits for financial planning, marketing, and organizational development. As another example, Waldner and Hunter (2008) describe an SL course wherein the students developed a policy analysis and best practices addressing the illegal dentistry market, a phenomenon that was adversely affecting the Hispanic population in the area. This service was provided for a state agency to help alleviate public concern.

Lowery's (2007) public administration students investigated the Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council's three indicators of county quality of life. Their analysis highlighted potential quality-of-life issues directly improving equitable distribution of services. In another course, the student teams produced a strategic

plan for a company that assisted at-risk youth and developed a human resources policy manual (Killian, 2004).

In all of the aforementioned examples, the SL course had an underlying though not explicit element of social equity; thus, the key is to emphasize the equity component and purposefully shine the spotlight upon it. John Rawls (1971) first identified social equity as a major consideration in the field of public administration and developed the principle of justice as “fairness, in which each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for all” (p. 250). The National Academy of Public Administration’s (NAPA) Standing Panel on Social Equity (2000) defined *social equity* as “the fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract,” as well as “the fair, just and equitable distribution of public services, and the implementation of public policy, and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy” (p. 1). Early developments in social equity thought were concentrated on race and gender in employment, democratic representation, and service delivery and later expanded to considerations of diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competencies and issues ranging from poverty to crime rates (Frederickson, 2005). Despite the increased focus on social equity, Johnson (2004) compellingly asserts that the field of public administration has not reached its potential because of its failure to genuinely incorporate social class as a research pillar of social equity.

Thus SL projects that focus on these issues, particularly on the equitable distribution of public services, have potential to excel in addressing social equity concerns. The need for a reorientation to the principles of social justice and equity is critical to the effectiveness to the field of public administration and to the role of the public administrators. Thus the training, preparation, and development of future public servants must not only address where social inequities persist, but must also be infused with both normative and positive examples of justice, equality, the proper use of administrative discretion, responsiveness, and competence while upholding the fundamental principles of the public sector.

The connection between social equity and SL generally has not been recognized in the public administration literature. However, the SL literature has explored this connection, as have researchers in other fields from education to nursing (e.g., Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Guthrie & McCracker, 2010; Maybach 1996; the literature also has its detractors; see Butin, 2006b). For example, Astin and Sax (1998) established linkages between civic engagement and SL, while Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) discovered that SL in certain circumstances can raise awareness of social justice in the participants. Rosenberger (2000) introduced “critical service learning” to formally establish the linkage between service learning and social justice. Critical SL emphasizes social change, rather than individual charity, and teaches students to question and critique society. Mitchell (2007) concurs by suggesting that critical SL seeks to connect social

justice and SL in “intentional and explicit” ways where students ask both “why and how.” These and other works underscore the potential for using SL as a mode to enhance awareness of social justice.

THE PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK: BRINGING SOCIAL EQUITY AND SERVICE LEARNING TOGETHER IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CLASSROOM

The Public Policy Course

The instructor and the community partner (CP), Fulton County, constructed a pedagogical framework that integrated SL and social equity, allowing students not only to learn about equity issues through the lens of health disparities but to engage in a hands-on policy analysis in a manner that benefited the CP and had the potential to affect social equity in the process. This was accomplished by carefully designing the course and the service component to meet the course learning objectives through the integration of the assignments, the blackboard discussion boards, the textbook readings, and even the reflections. Most important to both students and CP, the SL component in this course promised to significantly enhance the relevance of their work by purposefully bridging the gap between theory and practice.

The course was an online, 9-week, graduate-level public policy course. Examples of some of the university-determined course learning objectives included explaining various stages of the public policy process model, identifying ethical considerations, illustrating policy development that focuses on the needs of a diverse, multicultural society, and developing and defending a written policy analysis.

The students came from a wide variety of geographic, cultural, and professional backgrounds, both pre-service and in service; and from the private sector, military, nonprofits, and public agencies. The syllabus developed jointly by the instructor and the CP offered students “an opportunity to make a real difference for real people, right now, in an exciting project about healthy cities.” The instructor and partner jointly developed a mandatory student SL contract to clarify expectations (e.g., that their best work was expected, and that the board of supervisors was not legally obligated to use any proposals).

As a fully online course, the course platform (Blackboard) was used to facilitate ongoing discussion and communication. In addition, the professor used video-teleconferencing software (Wimba) for the real-time lectures and for real-time interface with the client (pilot sessions were run to identify potential technical issues). A “client reveal” Wimba session held the second week introduced students to the CP in real time. Students who could not attend in real time could watch the archive at a later time. The equity issues became more compelling, and students connected better to them, when they could hear about them firsthand from the CP herself online in real-time or archived sessions. The second session allowed students to ask the CP further questions about the project and to receive

feedback on their assignment ideas, and a third session was slated for final presentations to the client.

Service learning can take on a multitude of styles and forms. It can be hands-on work, or it can be products used by the community or clients. In this case, students were tasked with producing two products for the county. The first product, best practices research, asked students to find other local government examples of successful health equity programs or projects. The second product required them to evaluate three alternative projects the county could undertake to address health disparities; assess those alternatives in terms of cost, effectiveness, political feasibility, and other criteria; and make a recommendation. Because the students produced an actual product for a government or nonprofit partner as part of the course, this course readily constituted a type of SL earlier identified as the client-based course (Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

The CP provided regular feedback on the students' work. The instructor and CP structured the syllabus to provide for three Wimba sessions (Wimba software provides live interaction via webcam online), including an introductory session to brief students about the project and the requested products, a second question-and-answer session for students to obtain feedback on assignment progress, and a final session for real-time student presentations to the CP if desired.

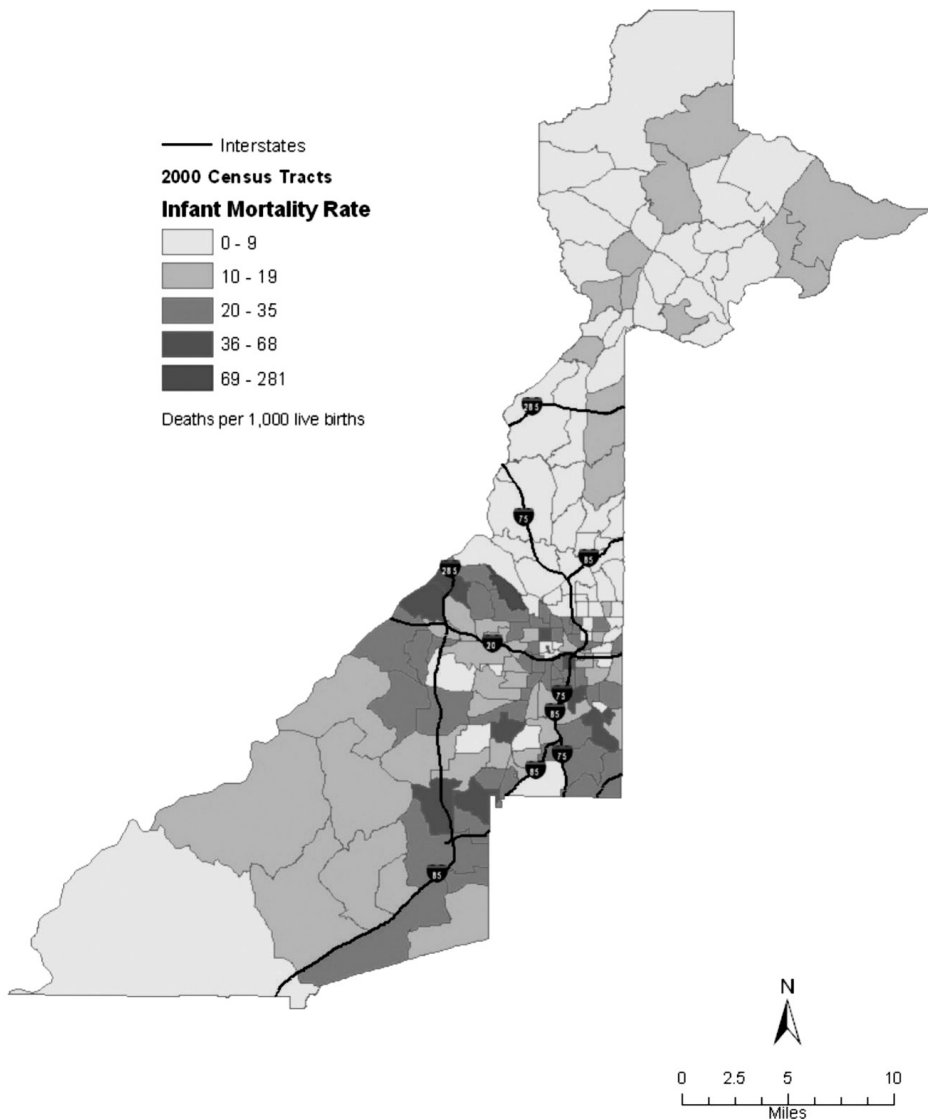
The Client

Fulton County is the largest county in Georgia. Atlanta, the county seat and the largest city in the state, serves as the state's capital and is a haven to a large African American middle class. When in 2008 the Georgia Department of Community Health (GDCH) published the *Georgia Minority Health Report Card*, the results were striking. GDCH gave Fulton County a grade of C in social/economic indicators, D in illness events, D in prenatal care, and F in overall health outcomes for its minority populations.

Local government is limited in its control of individual activities. However, local government's role includes allocating limited resources and structuring service delivery in a manner that enhances equity and promotes good stewardship. Troubled by the findings of the *Minority Health Report Card*, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners vowed through a resolution to combat the social determinants of health (SDHs). Social determinants are the built environment, access, and socioeconomic features of either the rural or urban space that affect both individual and community health and serve as drivers for population health disparities. More specifically, these barriers or enablers include geographical and physical mobility to develop healthy habits, housing design, walkable neighborhoods, and access to fresh foods. Social determinants of health have differential impacts depending on one's social status, which in turn creates health disparities, since the ability to control the impact of SDHs varies with political and economic power. In Fulton County, health disparities play out spatially along clear racial

and income lines; Atlanta's low-income African American neighborhoods experience vastly different health outcomes than the county's affluent white cities, based on infant mortality rates (Figure 1), AIDS death rates (Figure 2), asthma, diabetes, and more.

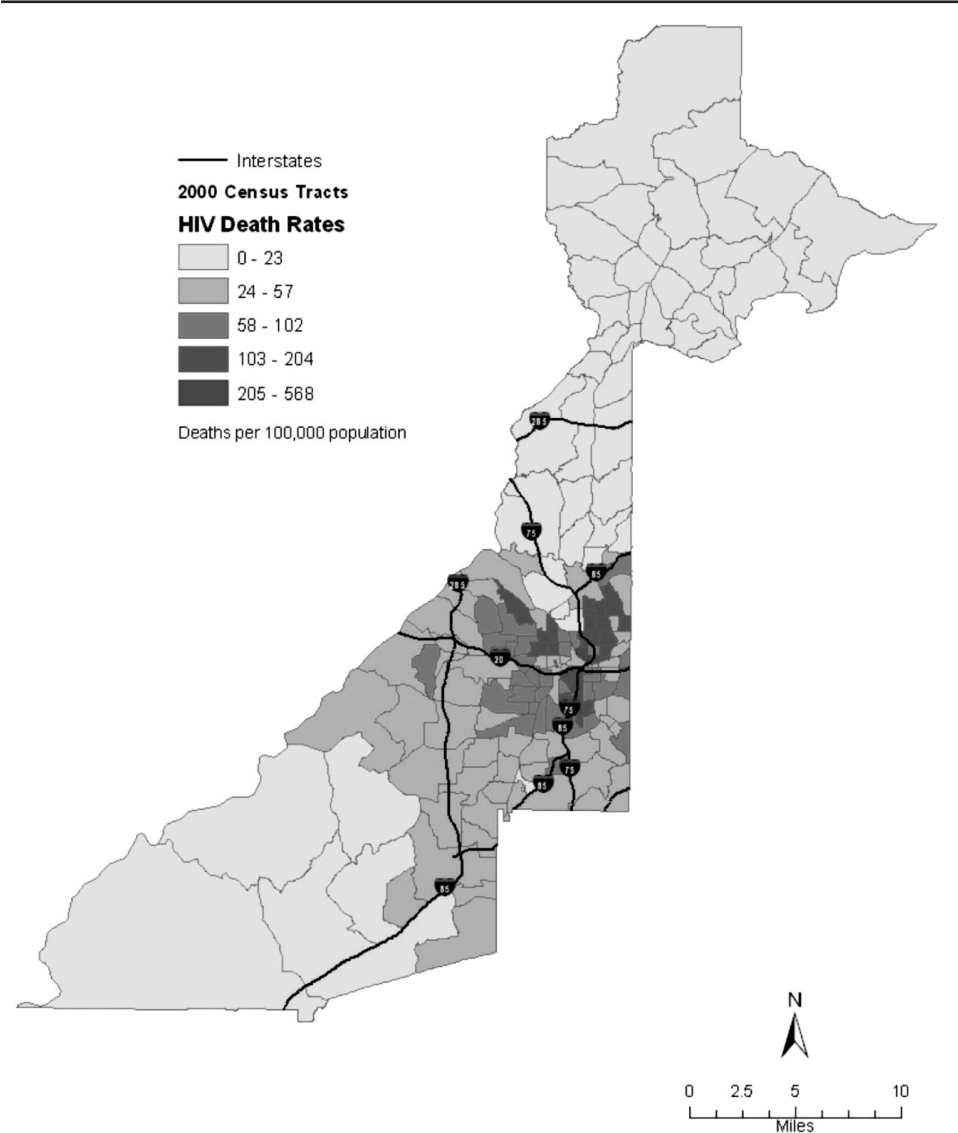
Figure 1.
Infant Mortality Rates by Census Tract, 1994–2005



Note. From *Common ground: Creating equity through public policy and community engagement* (Fulton County, 2008).

The Fulton County Human Services Cluster (HSC) departments (Health and Wellness, Human Services, and Mental Health) responded to the commissioners' call by forming Common Ground. Common Ground is a newly configured service delivery model combining the Departments of Human Services, Health and Wellness, Library, Arts, Housing, Cooperative Extension, Aging, and Mental

Figure 2.
HIV Death Rates by Census Tract, 1994–2005



Note. From *Common ground: Creating equity through public policy and community engagement* (Fulton County, 2008).

Health (Behavioral Health) into a new agency with the goal of delivering an improved and comprehensive health service. The restructuring aimed to break the silos among departments that can eventually affect population health, so that related personnel can all work toward the goal of improving community health.

The new agency created a Planning and Evaluation Division responsible for providing support for program designs to help the county accomplish its goals. The new division wanted fresh minds to think about the policy impacts and opportunities stemming from this new approach to public health. Therefore, they asked the public policy class to review what other governments were doing in relation to social determinants or healthy communities and to think of ways those programs might work in Fulton County. The seeds for such collaborative work had been sown several years before with the county's creation of the H.I.R.E. Learning program. Through H.I.R.E. Learning (Helping Interns and Researchers Expand Learning), the county serves as a town-gown laboratory where academics and practitioners work together on community and organizational issues. Having this type of structure in place made the CP more accessible and gave the class an opportunity to pay particular attention to ideas that could be recommended for the Oak Hill Facility, a newly renovated 22-acre site where youth programs in Health and Human Services and Juvenile Justice can collaborate on delivering services to their shared clients.

Fusing Course Learning Objectives, Service Learning, and Social Equity

How should the service component be tied into coursework in a way that enhanced learning—that actually deepened the student's knowledge and first-hand pragmatic experience with policy analysis and social justice? That was the pedagogical challenge. The CP and instructor tailored six course components to the SL experience: the syllabus, readings, discussion board postings, lectures, course shell, and assignments.

The syllabus was modified extensively from the standard template. First a section was added to generate excitement about the course mission and products, both to entice and educate prospective students. This section challenged students by asking them if their health and their children's health depended on where they lived and their socioeconomic background. This challenge also introduced the concept of health disparities and social determinants of health.

Blackboard shell modifications also occurred (the university uses Blackboard software as its online course platform). Specifically, the instructor added a "Resources" section containing additional resources about health equity, including video, document, and Internet links. The Blackboard discussion postings were also modified. Instead of generic textbook questions, the postings each week asked how those readings related to health disparities. For example, in week 2 of the course, students learned five different policy contexts, from economic to political. For the posting, students were asked to explain how the contexts affected

health disparities. This ensured that course content was covered well, in a manner explicitly related to the real-world context. The Blackboard postings served another function—the all-important reflection component. This core SL component allowed students to integrate their knowledge and experience. The weekly postings provided a direct venue for this reflection.

The readings were also modified. In week 1 of the course, students watched a video about the project provided by the county. The students also read the project report itself, authored by the county. No textbook or other readings were required for the week. This format allowed the students to brief themselves about the project before they met the client in the second week of the course. Each subsequent week had standard textbook and article readings to ensure that required course learning objectives were met.

The course contained three types of lectures—PowerPoints on the textbook, mini-lectures recorded by the instructor, and live lectures/policy workshops conducted on Wimba. The most significant modifications occurred in the live Wimba lectures. For example, instead of focusing the policy workshop on a generic policy, the topic was changed to focus on social determinants of health, so that it would relate explicitly to the student's assignments. The instructor and students jointly worked through the policy analysis, from problem definition to recommendations, using the health equity as the example of choice.

Both core assignments were modified to incorporate SL, as discussed earlier. The first assignment of best practices research was redesigned so that students would find other cities and counties that had undertaken health equity initiatives and compare the core components, strengths, and weaknesses of those programs. This gave Fulton County information on innovations elsewhere in the country. For the second assignment, the major policy analysis, students proposed three health equity project alternatives for the county and recommended one based on cost, effectiveness, and political feasibility. This work further helped the county assess respective strengths of potential alternatives.

The assignments thus served the essential function of weaving together the SL, social equity, and course learning objectives. Tailoring every course element—Blackboard discussions, lectures, and core assignments—to both the readings and the equity-based SL project ensured that the elements worked together to meet the course objectives, serve the client, and promote social equity seamlessly. The course learning objectives were assessed through graded discussion board posts, through final examinations that allowed the instructor to assess how well students had grasped the course materials, and through final course evaluations that contained specific questions about course objectives.

Use of the Pedagogical Framework in Other Course Subjects

This pedagogical framework combining social equity and SL could be employed in several public administration core and concentration courses. For

example, it could be integrated in a public budgeting course. Many municipalities lack the ability to attract and hire professionals with the expertise to maximize certain budgeting principles that are taught in quality MPA budgeting courses. Such concepts as tax/revenue elasticity and equity (horizontal and vertical), measures of efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability processes may not be well known. Utilization of SL can introduce expertise to the client that ensures that the budget process is efficient, fair, and equitable to all citizens of the jurisdiction. For example, Fulton County has also instituted a Gender Equity Initiative that is built upon social equity principles. The implementation of this initiative includes the integration of gender budgeting into the county's budgeting practices. Implementing gender equity into a budget course would give students the opportunity to examine how social equity is woven through each stage of the budgeting process. In addition, because the departments are asked to conduct gender impact statements, students could have an opportunity to suggest what those direct impacts on populations might be.

The pedagogical framework can also be applied in grant management or nonprofit management courses. By their very nature and mission, nonprofit organizations are designed to fill a niche or void in society by providing services not typically available in the public or private sector. Hence, the third sector, as nonprofit organizations are often referred to, aids in ensuring social justice by providing services to impoverished or disenfranchised groups (i.e., the Boys Club, the Girls Club, Habitat for Humanity, etc.). In these courses, students can be charged with developing grant proposals for a community partner. The assignment not only helps students to enhance their understanding of theoretical principles and methods for developing structured and unstructured grants but also provides the opportunity for students to apply those principles in developing grant proposals that will fund programs and offer critical services such as tutoring for underprivileged kids, housing for low-income families, and medical care and treatment for seniors. The outcomes of this effort—the realization of course learning outcomes, discussions, and dialogue among students on social equity issues—are critical outputs for the CP to aid in organizational programming and development.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

The course produced tangible benefits for the CP, the instructor, the students, and the instructional design (ID) team. The CP received two desired products. The first was best practices research that provided concrete examples of health equity programs in other jurisdictions throughout the country, such as the Healthy San Francisco program or the Florida Health Disparities Strategic Plan. Students honed their research skills by identifying a large number of programs through peer-reviewed journals, newspaper databases, and the Internet. The second product, a policy analysis, evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of such

programs in regard to cost, effectiveness, political feasibility, ease of administration, and other criteria germane to the alternatives chosen by the student. For example, one student compared three projects the county could incorporate into its planned Oak Hill health care center, including a health literacy program, a youth apprenticeship program, and a youth cooking program. The student recommended the youth apprenticeship program, based on effectiveness and cost projections (using data culled from the best practices research). Another student chose to evaluate three different youth apprenticeship programs that could be incorporated into the county's project. That student ultimately recommended an environmental-justice-based training program associated with a local university based on ease of administration and the projected job benefits. To maximize the benefit of these products, the instructor reviewed the student papers, serving as a filter for the work and often adding value in the form of indexes to the papers and summaries of all the papers. In addition to the two products, the CP considered the heightened student awareness of health disparities a significant outcome itself.

The instructor created a more dynamic and engaging course by incorporating SL. Students also perceptibly took the course more seriously because of the expectations articulated at the beginning of the course and the "call to action" placed in the syllabus. It was worth noting that two students dropped the course, fearing their other responsibilities would prevent them from delivering a high-quality product for the client.

The students benefited by conducting a real policy analysis for a real client, rather than a theoretical policy analysis based on student-selected topics. In this sense, students were better able to understand specific policy contexts and are better prepared for practice in the field. For example, the county experienced severe budget cuts during the class, thus potentially delaying project implementation. This forced the students to rethink the economic considerations of their recommendations. Though disheartening, it was an important lesson in real-world constraints of governmental policy settings.

Overall, students highly valued the ability to conduct a real analysis, as revealed in the anonymous course evaluations. One student commented:

[this] class should be one of the first, if not the first, class an MPA student takes. . . . Having a real world problem to work on this showed me how you can get in the community and make a difference. . . . For (the instructor) to take the County and use real world questions and answers was true learning.

Others noted that the "client-based course is such a great way to integrate policy and administrative terms and theory into tangible issues that impact local government." The enthusiasm for SL was not universal, however, as one student noted:

I was not prepared for a SL type of course. . . . Although the exposure to this type of course was helpful and interesting, it created an additional workload. I don't know if we'll fully understand the implications of our work either, unless the professor provides us feedback in the future.

Another significant outcome was the focus on the health disparities themselves and the resulting increase in cultural competency. Bush (2000) defines *cultural competence* as "understanding and respecting different ethnic and cultural systems." The county's Common Ground Initiative report highlighted the striking health disparities within the county, including infant mortality and asthma rates. Carrizales (2010) identifies health disparities as one of the earliest cultural competencies studied as "the health sector saw cultural competency as a means to provide quality health care through the elimination of existing disparities of health service among race and ethnic groups" (p. 594). The concept of health disparities allows students to consider issues of race and income, mediated through the lens of health outcomes. By the very nature of its project focus, the course makes students keenly aware of health disparities and resulting implications.

Though students gained awareness of health equity issues, the course also exposed the fault lines of the cultural stereotypes discussed by Johnson (2009). Much student discussion focused on the county's proposed Oak Hill project, a health center to be built in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Students were invited to research and propose potential programmatic initiatives to be considered for a county health center in Oak Hill. When a San Diego area student proposed a skateboard park, some classmates interjected the assumption that urban Atlanta youth would prefer a basketball court instead. When a student proposed a support program for grandparents raising their grandchildren, some classmates questioned the racial sensitivities of putting forth such a proposal.

These proposals generated rich discussion about how cultural perceptions might affect community need assessments, access to services, and overall project success. Instructive rather than divisive, the discussions enhanced awareness of how best to serve multicultural and diverse populations in an administrative setting. These efforts to build cultural competency could be further enhanced by incorporating specific course readings on social equity and cultural competence and encouraging discussion of key aspects.

The students also engaged in rich debate about ethical issues centered on stakeholder obligations (i.e., what responsibilities does the county have, and to whom?). For example, what moral obligations does the county have to its affluent taxpayers (those contributing the majority of taxes) versus its low-income population suffering the brunt of the health disparities? Students discussed the merits of and cautions about redistribution programs, rationales for government intervention, and equity concerns regarding stakeholders. Though most of the

students were very enthusiastic about the county's undertaking, others were dubious, as evidenced in the discussion board postings. One student remarked, "It's one thing if we are talking about distribution of resources such as affordable housing, good schools, parks, lighted bike paths, access to health care, and the like. If we are talking about distribution of wealth, then this proposal is up for a challenge. This proposal must be very careful not to cross the line of wealth distribution in its attempt to achieve health equity." Another student wrote, "Some might see the proposal as a waste of money; after all, this proposal highlights the homeless, the unemployed, the juvenile delinquent and the addicted as having health disparities. Some people will not want their tax dollars spent on this."

This dialogue should be expected in an equity-based SL course, and if done in a civil manner, it contributes to the valuable exchange of perspectives and development of cultural competencies (Johnson, 2009). In addition, the equity focus also helps meet NASPAA's requirement for ethics and diversity components in each core course. For programs without a stand-alone ethics course, this pedagogical framework could address ethics by assigning specific readings paired with an explicit discussion of ethics. For example, students could discuss teleological (e.g., Rawls, 1971) and deontological (e.g., Mill, 1861/1979) approaches (should the county be judged by its project intentions or by actual outcomes related to health disparities?). Requiring an ethics matrix such as Walton, Stearns, and Crespy's (1997) encourages students to consciously and strategically evaluate stakeholder obligations.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

A few of the limitations and challenges stemmed from the specific course format itself (online and intensive 9-week format). This format incurred some technological challenges (e.g., issues with software or hardware), and the 9-week format also created issues, such as inadequate turnaround time for client feedback. Group projects would likely be easier for the client to provide more extensive feedback on. (i.e., five group papers instead of 30 individual papers).

The workload also was a challenge, both for the instructor and the CP. As Killian (2004) notes, hybrid SL adds about 20% to the instructor's workload. Not only must the instructor work closely with the CP, but she or he must also serve as a filter for student work, modifying or adding value if it falls short. In addition, the added SL workload may have scared some students away from the policy course (though course evaluations were high, subsequent term enrollments were lower—perhaps due to the SL component or the newly added technology/webcam requirements). However, there may be some benefits to students self-selecting into a SL class in terms of interest and dedication to the project.

Social equity itself as a topic had some limitations. For example, some students were uncomfortable with the perceived redistributive nature of the project (using taxpayer dollars to address equity concerns). For other students, it was a subject

of great passion, and some wanted to stay involved with the project or do something similar in their own communities.

Measuring success of the framework may prove challenging. The first challenge is determining what to measure. Should it be learning outcomes, the value of the SL to the client, the value of SL to the students, social equity change, outcomes, or the overall awareness of social justice through attitudinal surveys? The SL literature suggests several methods for the service component. For example, some scholars have chosen to measure learning outcomes while others focus on social or community outcomes. Steinke and Fitch (2007) focus on learning outcomes. They have identified three broad categories of evaluation techniques, including research scales, written essays, protocols, interviews, or other qualitative tools. Other scholars measure social outcomes rather than learning outcomes. Wang et al. (2005) developed a survey instrument to measure four outcome domains: personal competence, interpersonal relationships, responsibility for community service, and responsibility for social justice. Social equity results of the project itself may potentially be measured using one or more of Svava and Burner's (2004) four dimensions of procedural fairness, access, quality, or outcomes. However, the limited product involvement of the students may not permit measurement of the ultimate long-term outcomes of the project.

Though the SL literature has clearly established a multitude of SL benefits, from stronger learning outcomes to skill development to enhanced racial understanding, researchers should not assume that these outcomes automatically manifest themselves in the fusion framework proposed here. For example, service-learning research shows that SL efforts can enhance civic engagement (e.g., Morgan & Streb, 2001; Prentice, 2007). However, there is provocative evidence that SL efforts may not enhance civic engagement in graduate public administration students (Reinke, 2003). Thus, the targeted benefits from the fusion framework should be verified through carefully designed research in the specific context of both undergraduate and graduate public administration courses.

Another problem discussed in the literature, and one likely to be overlooked, is the inherent "privilege" that the SL provider, student, instructor, and institution have in regard to the "served." Privilege suggests that the serving group has the time, money, expertise, and conviction to undertake the project. This privilege can be counterproductive if it fosters dependency, if it leaves the community with a fragmented experience, or if it is too short to complete the task and establish the infrastructure to continue the service, thus resulting in more harm than good to the intended recipient. Likewise, poor course or service design can reinforce earlier prejudices and stereotypes. Therefore, careful project design is required to avoid these issues and ensure that all parties are on equal footing (Baker-Boosamra, Guevara, & Balfour, 2006).

The SL component itself has potential limitations, such as how ultimately useful the product will be and whether it effectively influenced county policy. To

what extent did the students make a difference, particularly in a 9-week course where students were not geographically located in the same vicinity as the CP? In the following term, the instructor and CP narrowed the scope so that students could focus in more depth on three issues of particular concern to the county, including childhood obesity and high-school dropout rates. Thus, repeating the SL course over several terms with different students allows development of the product for the CP but still raises the question of how ultimately useful the product will be.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I'll understand. —Chinese proverb

Johnson and Rivera (2007) assert that “graduate public affairs students need greater exposure to diversity themes and issues.” Furthermore, Carrizales (2010, p. 601) urges us that “rather than wait until students become public servants,” to incorporate relevant programs in the public affairs curriculum, we should plan “to begin developing understandings of cultural competency sooner instead of later.” The social equity/service-learning fusion framework answers this call by providing students with hands-on experience in a social justice matter via SL—in essence, involving them firsthand so that they understand.

The fusion framework transforms classrooms into a laboratory connecting theoretical concepts to real-world public administration issues, immersing students in an experiential learning process. This pedagogical framework dovetails well with other public administration teaching philosophies including experiential learning (Denhardt, 2001) and student-centered learning (Breen, Matusitz, & Wan, 2009). However, the public administration literature itself has not explicitly recognized or capitalized on the relationship between social justice and SL thus far, creating fertile ground for further study of this framework.

Ironically, the fusion framework takes public administration back to its pedagogical roots in grounded application. As described by Stivers (2000), the first professional school of public administration, the Training School for Public Service, functioned as part of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research. The application-based curriculum put students to work in courses such as law and municipal government, legislative drafting, municipal accounting, and more. Though in a different incarnation, the fusion framework takes us back full circle to those experiential applied roots, connecting students to the field and priming them to make meaningful contributions to it.

The fusion framework explored here, combining SL and social equity, may possess distinct advantages over other time-honored public administration pedagogical techniques such as case studies or research papers. It promotes

experiential learning due to its interactive nature, by allowing students and the CP to actively shape a product useful for the community. Case studies and research papers lack a certain element of obligation or accountability. If instructors assign a case study, the student is accountable to themselves and the instructor, whereas the social equity/SL framework also requires students to be accountable to the external community partner and their constituents, thus potentially increasing investment in work quality. Moreover, the accessibility of the CP for questions may provide a more context-rich environment compared to case studies, since those techniques tend to operate with limited and static information. Future studies should assess the relative pedagogical benefits of these techniques in the future.

The key finding here is that social equity topics can be successfully integrated into the public administration classroom in a sound pedagogical framework. The primary technique in the fusion framework is to develop a service-learning project specifically related to social equity. Thus, social equity can be used both as delivery mechanism for course content and to produce useful products for the community partner via SL. In this model, students not only learn about social equity, but *actually do something about it* in the context of the class setting. Beyond increasing awareness of social justice, the framework also confers the numerous benefits of SL for the student (e.g., skill development, client communication, problem solving), the community partner (tangible product outcomes), and the instructor (e.g., enhanced student engagement in course, service opportunity for faculty, etc.). The framework also provides a platform or vehicle to incorporate course objectives such as ethics, diversity, and cultural competency.

The chief task is to choose an SL component with an equity focus. Though students can engage in SL without an explicit equity focus, this would fail to produce awareness. Alternately, focusing on social equity without hands-on SL would leave students without a firsthand opportunity to engage in and affect social equity. Thus, it is the fusion of the two elements—the service learning and the social equity focus—that maximizes the opportunity for real-world experience and change of awareness, while optimizing course learning outcomes. Indeed, since many SL courses have an underlying social equity component, it provides a ready opportunity for the instructor to highlight the equity aspect and use that as a foundation for the coursework. A step-by-step pedagogical framework might include something along the lines of the following (Table 2).

In a broader context, how do we stand up “the third pillar” (Svara & Burnet, 2004) of public administration—social equity? Our answer is to integrate service-learning—specifically, SL on topics related to social equity, such as health disparities, recidivism and prisoner reentry, and more that focus on distribution of public services. This recommendation is in line with D’Agostino’s (2008) call for the inclusion of civic engagement into the goals or objectives of an MPA

Table 2.

Steps in the Serving Up Justice Framework

Step 1. Select social equity course topic.
Step 2. Identify community partner/client agency for appropriate social-equity service-learning project.
Step 3. Co-develop syllabus.
Step 4. Co-develop memorandum of understanding (MOU); establish client and student expectations, including meeting dates and feedback.
Step 5. Tailor all assignment elements (discussion boards, textbook discussions, lectures, assignments) to the course topic and service-learning projects, using the course topic as example to illuminate text and other learning resources. Ensure that course learning objectives are still optimally met.
Step 6. Develop and deploy course shell, if an online course.
Step 7. Hold client meetings and obtain client feedback throughout course.
Step 8. Assemble student products; review and add value if needed before submitting to community partner.
Step 9. Measure outcomes through course evaluations and other measures.

program and for MPA programs to implement an SL course through either the capstone course or an internship, thereby actively fostering civic engagement. Additionally, there have been calls for NASPAA engagement with universities for development and data collection in regard to SL impact on communities (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). As a step further to help institutionalize this practice, specialized accreditation groups such as NASPAA could consider requiring this type of fusion SL or promoting a voluntary goal that accredited MPA programs have a minimum of 10% of their courses as equity-based fusion SL courses by 2020. This would help integrate social equity as a core pillar in public administration programs. This requirement may dovetail well with the mission of public administration programs, which is to train exemplary public

servants. What better way than to require service, especially service geared toward social equity?

Another potential tool may be to identify or develop grant funds to create a collaborative social equity SL clearinghouse online. Such a clearinghouse would be able to connect students from anywhere to community partners anywhere in the world, with adequate technological support. This would in part answer Wooldridge and Gooden's (2009) and Candler et al.'s (2009) call to address international or global poverty issues in a broader social equity setting. Such grants or such a clearinghouse could also provide model SL sessions and mentor those that are new or uncomfortable with service learning (or conversely, an experienced SL instructor new to online instruction). Such a clearinghouse may be a powerful way to promote integration of social equity concerns in the classroom and to effectively stand up the third pillar of public administration.

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